

STATEMENT OF
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Before the
COMMITTEE ON POST OFFICE AND CIVIL SERVICE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Chairwoman Schroeder and Members of the Committee, I am delighted to be here today to discuss with you my experiences with the Senior Executive Service (SES). My name is Richard T. Dewling, and I am the Deputy Regional Administrator of Region II (New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico & Virgin Islands), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. I have held this position for the past six and one-half years, and I have been associated with EPA and its predecessor agencies --- USPHS, FWPCA, FWQA --- for the past twenty years.

In order for you to understand my viewpoint better, it is important to provide you with a little personal background on my training and feelings about EPA. I received my Ph.D. in Environmental Science/Engineering from Rutgers University in 1977. EPA paid the full cost of this training, which extended over an eight year period and included a 12 month, full-time, training assignment at the University. I'm a licensed professional engineer in the State of New Jersey, as well as a licensed wastewater treatment plant operator in New York. I have authored over 100 technical articles dealing with pollution control technology. I also serve as a faculty member at Rutgers University, and am a member of the Advisory Committee to the Board of Trustees,

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Civil and Environmental Engineering, New Jersey Institute of Technology. My environmental experience not only includes Federal service, but also engineering consulting, and municipal government.

Without sounding trite, I would hope it's clear that my profession and job are one and the same, i.e., environmental protection. Needless to say there is no better place to accomplish this objective than serving with EPA which in my opinion, has been and continues to be a dynamic and respected professional organization.

Ms. Schroeder, my perspective on SES may be somewhat different than others, as most of my experience is "regional" as opposed to "headquarters". EPA, Region II, has approximately 600 employees and annual operating budget of about \$22 million. In the past six and one-half years that I've served as Deputy, there have been four Regional Administrators (RA), whom as you know are political appointees. Discounting one RA, who resigned after three days, the average tenure has been about one and one-half years. During two transition periods, each lasting a year or more, I was acting Regional Administrator. Obviously, I've had my share of "120-day-get-acquainted-periods". I have been successful in maintaining my present position because competent, fair-minded individuals have been appointed as Regional Administrator. They allowed me the opportunity to demonstrate that we could work successfully together as a team. I maintain, however, that in order to develop this

confidence and working relationship a minimum of six months is required - not 120 days. While I have been fortunate, some of my counterparts in other regions have not.

In a region, where there are only four or five SES positions, there is no place to "hide" a career senior executive who does not fit the mold of the "new team". Thus, the only options available to such an individual are an IPA assignment, transfer to headquarters, or resignation from the Agency. Unfortunately, all three options generally lead to a situation where you have an executive "in-waiting", hoping his or her star will shine again when a new team takes over. To say it more poetically, "TODAY'S PEACOCKS ARE TOMORROW'S TURKEYS!

Your question regarding whether or not SES has increased productivity is an interesting one. Since we're not in the business of producing "widgets," it's hard to measure increased output along these lines. However, if you measure output in terms of the more efficient operation that results from maintaining a stable executive corp, (which means less upset due to shifts in priorities and programs, less time spent in re-grouping, re-organizing and bringing new people-up-to-speed), then SES has improved government productivity. Being treated on a par with the "outside-world" --- formalized executive development programs, adequate salary, eligibility for recognition --- certainly goes a long way to attract new talent and assures that top career executives stay in government. It's important to emphasize that offering a bonus program is not

the single most important motivating tool for individuals such as me. Job satisfaction, which includes technical challenge, diversity, and complexity, is the key element that influences SES executives. Cash awards and other forms of recognition are a part of an overall performance system - they are not pivotal. To make my point more specific, since I'm not eligible for a "rank" award" for another five years, does that mean I won't be productive until I'm eligible again? Obviously, the answer is NO!

From a personal standpoint, a very attractive feature of SES is the ability to accumulate unused annual leave. Prior to SES, I once had a supervisor who based my performance evaluation on the number of leave days forfeited. Somehow I feel that sooner or later this "delayed income" feature, widely used in industry to attract and maintain top executives, will be curtailed, just as the number of bonuses were reduced from 50 to 20 percent. With regard to this latter issue, it's encouraging to see OPM releasing its hold on this restriction.

Like all systems, SES has room for improvement. The Civil Service Reform Act provided for the establishment of executive development programs. Unfortunately, EPA, like many other small agencies, has not yet established a formal executive development program for SES members and candidates. EPA is moving in the right direction to address these problems by planning to create an Office of Human Resources Management. The program would provide more than the traditional employment services characteristic of operating personnel offices. It would place

importance on the need to integrate "people issues" into the Agency's strategic program and resource planning processes. Activities would include short and long-range strategies for enhanced employee relations, career development, incentive programs, employment policies and recruitment.

One final comment. There appears to be a great deal of emphasis on improving the managerial competence of individuals, while at the same time only minimally addressing the need to maintain and improve the technical skills of senior government scientists/engineers in and out of the SES system. Since many technical people are reluctant to become embroiled in the management issues, there should be a companion system within SES to accomodate this critical need. I emphasize this issue, because I honestly believe that the legacy EPA leaves behind 20 to 30 years from now will not be the number of hazardous waste sites cleaned up or the number of enforcement actions taken, but rather the credibility of the scientific decisions made which have the potential to impact the health and welfare of individuals for generations to come.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to present my views. I'll be happy to answer any questions you might have.